

The Vital Force

Journal of the Tai Chi Chih® Community

"Tai Chi Chih is a Service to Humanity. It is a Form of Love." — Justin Stone, Originator

Volume 22, No. 2

April 2005



Contents

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|---|--------------------------|---|
| 3 | Contributors | 17 | Experiential Energy, better known
as fast magic | 27 | Student-Teacher Retreat Feb. 1-4 |
| 4 | Conference Registration Report | 18 | Christmas in February, Donation
to the TCC Project at Avenal
Prison by Bay Area TCC
Teachers | 28 | Room Full of Chi |
| 4 | Sign up for the Talent Show and
Poetry Slam | 28 | Teacher Retreat Feb. 15-18 | 30 | Friends |
| Justin Stone | | 31 | Letting it flow by letting it go in
Saskatchewan | 32 | T'ai Chi Chih Workshop in Tupelo,
Mississippi: Home of the
Swivel |
| 5 | Notes to Myself | Our Students, Our Selves | | 33 | Lake County IL teachers celebrate
World Tai Chi Chih Day |
| Words from our Guide | | 19 | Trust That Nothing Happens By
Accident | TCC On Location | |
| 6 | My recent journeys in California | 20 | The Senior Side of T'ai Chi Chih | 34 | Ah, que c'est jolie, la France! |
| 7 | Teaching a T'ai Chi Chih Course in
Hertford, NC | 20 | More than Valentine's bouquets | The Lighter Side | |
| 8 | Traveling Abroad | 21 | Unsung Heroes | 35 | |
| 8 | E-mailing thoughts for your
reflection and sharing | 21 | Go deeper at a Seijaku/Meditation
Retreat | Staying Connected | |
| Video Review | | Trainings, Intensives, Workshops,
Retreats | | 36 | DVDs, CDs, and Movement – Oh
My |
| 8 | On the Road Home, A Spiritual
Journey Guided by Remarkable
Women | 22 | Softly falling snow mirrors
flowing movements of 11 new
teachers accredited in
Minnesota's late winter | 38 | 20th Annual International T'ai Chi
Chih® Teachers' Conference |
| Interview | | 25 | From an auditor's perspective | 41 | Contacts |
| 11 | David Fuess, internal optimist | 26 | Many Paths - One Destination | 41 | Subscribe to the Vital Force |
| TCC and Prisons | | 26 | Joy in the Heart, Joy in the Mind,
Joy in the Soul! | 42 | Calendar |
| 15 | Sr. Antonia carries heart into the
heart of Folsom | 27 | A Student's Perspective | | |



Contributors

Living in the Sunshine Province of Saskatchewan gives **Donna Aldous** another reason to smile other than TCC. No matter how much it snows, or how cold it gets, the sun will be out the very next day to bring a feeling of joy, warmth and happiness. After reading Dr. Wayne Dyers book, "The Power of Intention," Donna realized how much the world is looking for connectedness. And TCC has it all. She says we just need to get the word out because people are looking for what we have to offer. Donna spent 11 days in March with TCC Teacher Catherine Briussel touring her beautiful country of France.

Linda Braga has a passion for people. Her career in teaching handicapped children taught her a valuable lesson: compassion for the person that is hard to like, the so-called rejects of society, the "throw-away" lives of those living in our prisons as well as in Special Education classrooms in America. She says that TCC has taught her acceptance, living more in the present moment and suspending judgment. All people have the spark of God in them-- why not try to find it in every one?

Dan Butterfass lives in Rochester, Minnesota with his wife, Ellen, their two children, Samuel and Sophie (ages 7 & 4), and Rosie, a yellow Labrador retriever. In addition to spending time with his family, he enjoys reading, writing, hiking, fishing, bird hunting, and travel. He is a past and current student of Bonnie Sokolov.

Carmen Brocklehurst loves talking with people, including teachers, about all things related to T'ai Chi Chih. She fully appreciates the desires and dreams that others have for this wonderful discipline. She is also very grateful that Justin lives in Albuquerque, is healthy, and willing and able to impart jewels of wisdom about T'ai Chi Chih.



Debbie Cole is stretching her comfort zone from Rehoboth Beach, DE to Baltimore, MD as she prepares for a two-day 140-mile bike ride (May 14-15) to raise money for a local organization that prepares and delivers food to people who are homebound with HIV/AIDS. It is not only an opportunity to stretch physically, but also emotionally as she asks for help to raise the \$1200 obligated by signing on to the ride. Check out her secure website to check her progress or to make a donation <http://ridefortheeast.kintera.org/faf/r.asp?t=4&i=60203&u=60203-70294619&e=>

Sr. Antonia Cooper is the Guide of T'ai Chi Chih. She is on the road a lot these days.

Kathy Grassel enjoys running for peace. Every spring she joins other runners in a pilgrimage 28 miles uphill to Los Alamos, New Mexico where the first atom bombs were made. The run begins in the little pilgrim church in Chimayo whose holy soil is said to have worked many miracles. Runners carry a pouch of this soil and sprinkle it on the ground of Los Alamos.

Grace Hathaway resides in Seattle, Washington and part time in San Diego, California. Prior to attending the Mt. Calvary T'ai Chi Chih retreat, Grace had done her TCC practices with a video by Pam Towne. A friend gave her the video, believing that the exercises would help her with life changes and some medical problems. Just prior to the retreat, Grace completed a course of holistic healing and exercises. Pam Towne lovingly agreed to her attending the retreat to enhance the healing process and improve her TCC skills. The retreat proved to be a pivotal experience for Grace. The kind support of teachers and other stu-

dents dealing with her level of expertise versus theirs exemplified the joy of mind, body and spirit that is the integral essence of T'ai Chi Chih.

James Hecker was incarcerated in Folsom Prison for 21 years before being released 18 months ago. While there, he was accredited as a TCC teacher and introduced hundreds of men to Tai Chi Chih. He still teaches TCC and lectures about its powers to transform..

Judy Hendricks is enjoying teaching TCC to children and their parents in Albuquerque, NM. It is a challenge to keep the kids well grounded during class. Despite the challenges, she is planning a Young Tots Class (children aged 3-5 yrs old) and their parents in April.

Leslie Keith lives on a mixed farm in St. Paul, Alberta, Canada. Tai Chi Chih has helped her to quit smoking (and given her the confidence that she will never return to smoking), as well as to lose 30+ pounds and receive daily relief from osteoarthritic pain. Leslie became an accredited TCC instructor in September 2003. In 1970, she graduated with honors in sociology from the University of Essex in England. She also has a certificate in adult and continuing education from the University of Alberta. For the past 15 years, she has been a library clerk in the St. Paul Provincial Court Library. In addition to TCC, Leslie teaches soap making at the St. Paul Visual Arts Centre.

Guy Kent has been a student of Carmen Brocklehurst for 18 years and enjoys starting his day with T'ai Chi Chih practice. He is always surprised at the joy and insights that randomly occur in his life which he directly attributes to regular TCC practice. In his spare time Guy enjoys receiving and record-

陽

ing your registrations for the 2005 TCC Teachers' Conference. Guy is grateful to Carmen for her faithful guidance and Justin for his continuous teaching and sharing of himself to our Community.

Neena Mitchell delights in teaching T'ai Chi Chih when "The Flow" brings her the opportunity. Her latest student is a very pregnant daughter who finds the gentle TCC moves beneficial for herself and the "heavy weight" she carries.

Andrea Skillman is from Lake County, Illinois. She was accredited in 2003. She has a background in nursing and holds a holistic nursing certification. Presently she supervises in a 360-bed long-term care facility. She has been teaching TCC to the residents for two years and they report that they find it is most beneficial in improved balance and stress reduction.

Bonnie Sokolov began studying T'ai Chi Chih in 1998 and was accredited in 2001. She lives in Rochester, Minnesota with her husband Vlad, three dogs – Brownie, Woody and Zorki and her cat Ollie. With a husband, 3 male dogs and a male cat she signs her Christmas cards "From Bonnie and the Boys."

Justin Stone many years ago had an offer to write songs for the great Cole Porter. He "coulda been somebody."

Judy Tretheway has a web log (blog) at <http://chifully.blogspot.com> on which she has posted several articles and journals of her experiences teaching in New and Old Folsom, plus links to newsletters and other sites featuring groups who do dharma work inside correctional facilities. Judy has been teaching Tai Chi Chih at the Folsoms for seven years.

陰

Conference Registration Report

By Guy Kent

This year's Teachers' Conference is rapidly approaching. A big thanks to the 120+ registrants that have stated their intent to be in Albuquerque this August! If you're still undecided, we would love to have you join fellow teachers and Justin Stone for this joy-filled event. The sooner we hear from you the better position we are in when working with the Marriott to allocate our rooms. It's not too late to commit to doing something for yourself for a change!

If you are going to extend your stay in New Mexico pre- or post-Conference, the Marriott is extending the Conference room rate of \$85/night from the 1st to the 10th of August. In order to simplify room allocation, the Conference Committee will coordinate your extended stay dates with the Marriott for you. *This is a change from*

what is listed on the registration form. All you now need to do is notify Guy Kent (guykent@yahoo.com or 505-345-0031) with your travel dates and your room will be set aside for the extra days. On check-in your credit card will be used to pay for the non-Conference nights at the hotel.

We do have a fair number of couples coming. One recurring question has been how best to handle this. There are two ways to register if you want to bring a friend. If you register as two doubles, your partner can eat with our group. If you register as a single, your partner will be on their own for meals (there are several restaurants within safe walking distance of the Marriott). If you have any other questions (or have sent in your registration and have NOT received a confirmation note) please contact Guy Kent. See you in August!

Sign up for the Talent Show and Poetry Slam

By Kathy Grassel, your friendly talent show Emcee

No doubt about it, people who do TCC have talent. How many of you thought you had no talent before you started practicing TCC? Suddenly you could tap dance and sing La Traviata. TCC is famous for shyness reduction, so are you one of those who would like to bring your talent out of the closet and onto the stage at the Conference? E-mail me at k_grassel@yahoo.com with your desires.

Most likely we will also have a haiku and pyramid poetry slam on Friday night, dividing ourselves into sectors and having Antonia, Pam, and Sandy be judges. You'll be given a subject on the spot and have five minutes to write. Say, the subject is Thanksgiving haiku. Haiku has 17 syllables in three lines of 5-7-5.

*Modern pilgrims wear
Land's End and L.L. Bean gear
Now how Plymouth rocks!*

*Modern turkeys have
abnormally big breasts
Scrawny birds no more.*

*Who would ever guess
cranberry sauce from a can
used to be a plant?*

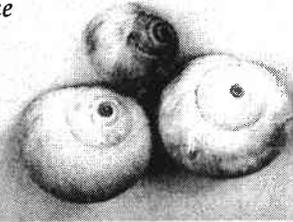
Everyone knows how to write pyramid poetry. If not, go ask Sr. Alice.

*How
easy!
Pyramid
poetry is
inviting
us to
win!*

Justin Stone

Notes to Myself

By Justin Stone



Going through some old papers, I came across a few notes to myself, some of which follow.

Ultimately, the key is "Gratitude." This is the magic pill that ends suffering. Gratitude for this day, for this life, is not hard to experience. Paul Reps said, "How grateful I am with no thing to be grateful for." He did not say "nothing" to be grateful for, but "no thing." The difference between "nothing" and "no thing" should be studied.

.....

Arrogance will not allow one to heed the council of another. Self-centeredness is the opposite of Yoga (unity). Not expanding to fill the Universe but contracting to bring everything into the radius of the small self is usual but not favorable.

.....

Everything changes, yet everything remains the same. This is the great mystery. A sage understands what that means. From the individual standpoint, we must change in order to remain the same. I emphasize that "everything is in a state of flux." Yet everything is as it has always been.

.....

There are two levels of truth. First, there is the personal. Here questions must be answered with the knowledge that the individual is interested in earning a good living and in the intricacies of relationships. The second level is the Universal, not looking at things from one point of view but being conscious of Cosmic meanings—what really is Life and Being. Comparatively few are interested in the second Truth and are turned off by revelations a few have had because they have nothing to do with the individual.

.....

Creativity comes naturally to truly spiritually-minded ones. This is the reason why many Zen masters were very original painters and very wise poets. Most left a verse for their followers when they were dying—the "Last Word," so-called. It was often likened to "a snowflake in a raging fire."

.....

When one is bored, it means one is bored with him or herself.

.....

From the artificial to the natural, with gratitude—this is the Way. Gadgets do not make people happy. Bliss comes from inside.

.....

The Sutras, and other spiritual documents, are all saying, "Everything is as it has always been." The Uncarved Block was never carved and turned into individual "souls." Adam and Even never left the "Garden of Eden," also known as the "Uncarved Block."

.....

We shape everything as we are led (puppets?), thinking that we have control of what we become. Faith in ourselves, very uncommon, is necessary. Outside, in the Cosmos, there is only vibration. Inside, much vaster, we find Eternity. The big mistake is to judge as an individual. To know Truth, one must think of the Whole and understand why, in this great Multiplicity, all is said to be One. Churches cater to the individual, but it is the road away from the Truth. The Chinese speak of the Uncarved Block, before the Yin and Yang, or anything else. To know, in truth, that nothing left the Uncarved Block is Wisdom. With the beginning of time came the great illusion. Do you want to know the Truth or remain brainwashed?



陽

Words from our Guide

My recent journeys in California

By Sr. Antonia Cooper, OSF



When I arrived in San Diego, California January 30 to begin a three-week journey to various parts of the state, I had no idea that so many surprises, joys, connections and experiences would await me.

Pam Towne hosted two T'ai Chi Chih retreats: Feb. 1-4 for 19 students and 5 teachers besides Pam and me; and another Feb. 15-18 for 18 teachers, besides Pam, Sandy and me. Both retreats were held at Mt. Calvary Retreat House, "a large Spanish-style house that is dramatically situated on a ridge 1,250 feet above Santa Barbara

with a commanding view of the seacoast and Pacific Ocean." Holy Cross Brothers, an Anglican community following the Benedictine Rule,

welcomed us into their monastic space. The gardens, view, hospitality, all made it a perfect place to focus on the T'ai Chi Chih movements and practice. Plans are in place for another February TCC Retreat in 2006.

At the end of the first retreat, I left Mt. Calvary and headed for la Casa de Maria to spend the weekend with teachers from four spiritual traditions in making this my own retreat. The Way of Contemplation and Compassionate Action brings together great spiritual teachers of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Judaism to reveal their deep contemplative practices and to show how they can lead each of us to compassionate action in the world. Fr. Thomas Keating, a Trappist Monk (like Thomas Merton) spoke on Centering Prayer from the Christian tradition; Rabbi Rami Shapiro, Ph.D. shared the Jewish tradition and Chant; Shaikh Kabir and Camille Helminski presented Sufi-Islam in simple dance, chant, to light drumming; and the Buddhist tradition was presented by The Venerable Tenzin Priyadarshi touching on Bodhisattva Ways of Life and chant. This experience further deepened my awareness that we are all one. A concluding interspiritual service demonstrated the underlying unity of contemplation and compassionate action among the world's great spiritual traditions.

After this immersion into these traditions and spiritual practices, I headed to Sacramento, a 9-hour bus/train trip to visit with Judy Tretheway who has been teaching T'ai Chi Chih in Folsom Prison for six years now. She recently began a

new class at the New Folsom Prison. Because of the "lock-down" of the "White and Hispanic" population, there were only five Black men who were able to attend. They were very attentive and eager to learn. We spent the morning in a large windowless room, made of unpainted cinder block, which is used as a Chapel for various religious services. Judy graciously invited me to lead the group. To give the men an idea of Justin's writings, I read "The Essence of T'ai Chi Chih" from *Spiritual Odyssey*, pg. 23. It is important for them to realize the reality of each word in that final full paragraph, beginning with: "T'ai Chi Chih becomes a way of life." Weeks prior to the trip, I asked Judy if she could arrange for me to accompany her to these two classes. After looking into my police record and background checks I was given the okay, but we only found that out Thursday afternoon at the check point of Old Folsom Prison. I couldn't imagine spending year after year incarcerated there. The men who have learned T'ai Chi Chih have experienced inner freedom through the simple movements. There were over 30 men who assembled in the airy, sunlit, Chapel, which is used for a variety of religious services and meditative practices. There were a few men who have been practicing regularly for 5 = 6 years — their form is soft and flowing, and serenity seems to envelop their being as they moved in a centered and grounded way. They had practiced with James Hecker, who was accredited as a TCC teacher. I told Judy that, with individual mentoring, a couple of the men could be prepared to take an accreditation course. Pam is willing to go into Folsom to conduct a training when the time is right. Judy is investi-

gating ways of how it can happen. So we just have to be patient and trust it will happen. I personally felt blessed for these two opportunities to be with the inmates and see how the T'ai Chi Chih practice is transforming their lives. They spoke very openly about this transformation and asked when I will return!!! Actually I may be attending our Franciscan Federation Conference this July in San Diego, which may present another opportunity to visit Judy and the men at Folsom. I received a letter from one of the men who moves quite well. He has a copy of *Spiritual Odyssey* and wrote me about Justin's quote at the bottom of pg. 117.

On Sunday, Pam and I drove back to San Diego for my return flight to New Jersey the following day, but made

plans to stop to see Greg Callahan who was just released from Folsom in December. Greg is interested in Accreditation as well. He is associated with an International Buddhist Temple in a Korean area of Los Angeles. Roberta and John Taggart joined us along with Gordon Dixon; his wife Gaunnie was just accredited in November in Albuquerque. Roberta and John are making commitments to meet with Greg every other Sunday to help him become more aware of how to move in preparation for Accreditation. Greg has a lot of refining to do, but he is very open to and sincere about the possibility. I am touched by the generosity of their commitment. Pam, Sandy and I were discussing ways in which to financially support people like Greg and the men in Folsom who are preparing for Accreditation.

On February 28, I was processed at our Somerset County Jail to begin teaching TCC there. This has been a desire of mine for at least five years, but guards at both state prisons where I had applied "blocked" the classes in fear that this form was a martial art. Of course nothing I said in defense of TCC would change their mind. At that time, as now, I believe that when the time is right, it will happen. It looks like the time is right!

So, you see, I have been gifted beyond my greatest expectations. Actually, I really did not go with any, but tried to live each moment fully, one moment at a time. After all, this is what our T'ai Chi Chih practice teaches us, to fully BE in the present moment.

Teaching a T'ai Chi Chih Course in Hertford, NC

What a surprise it was to receive an invitation to conduct a T'ai Chi Chih Retreat in Hertford, NC. It was extended by a woman who had been a student with me in a training course for Spiritual Direction in 1986-88. She and her husband had taken an early retirement, built a lovely home in a retirement community complete with an 18-hole golf course, pools, tennis courts, and a club house. We decided on January 16 - 19 and she put out the invitation with 15 persons responding from the retirement community and her church. None of the participants were familiar with the T'ai Chi Chih form, but all were open and eager to learn. The retreat totaled about 16



hours; learning "how to move," viewing parts of Justin's video and the Teachers Practice, Pam's video, using quotes of Justin taken from various sources; we laughed and experienced the "joy thru movement" as well as some frustration with the taffies. When we got to Passing Clouds, I was getting frustrated myself because no matter what was said, or what image was used, they just were not getting

it. Not knowing what else to do, I invited them to find a partner, and directed them to do "Partner Practice." A few said it would be like the blind leading the blind, but I said that would be okay. So with great attentiveness to one another, they gave in to the process. I walked around the room and to my great surprise, something happened, and, for the most part, they were moving quite well. Thank you, Linda Braga, for sharing this process with us during the past couple Conferences. I may be traveling back to North Carolina in six months to do a one-day workshop to further deepen their understanding and experience of TCC.

SR. ANTONIA—
continued on next page

陽